

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION HANDBOOK

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
St. Cloud VA Health Care System

**Center for Development & Civic
Engagement/Voluntary Service (CDCE/VS)**

**ST. CLOUD VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
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Contents

WELCOME TO THE ST. CLOUD VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM.....	3
WHO WE ARE.....	3
OUR / CARE VALUES	4
OUR PATIENTS	4
RED VEST / RED CARD PROGRAM.....	5
VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION	6
CUSTOMER SERVICE	7
TRANSPORTING PATIENTS WITH A WHEELCHAIR	7
WHEELCHAIR ETIQUETTE	8
PATIENT ADVOCACY PROGRAM	9
HIPAA PRIVACY RULE TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEERS	9
TAKING PICTURES ON CAMPUS	10
CODE OF CONDUCT FOR VOLUNTEERS.....	11
DRESS CODE FOR VOLUNTEERS	12
FEDERAL TORT CLAIMS ACT	13
HOSPITAL SAFETY	15
EMERGENCIES AND NUMBERS	15
SEVERE WEATHER ALERTS.....	15
FIRE PLAN: R.A.C.E. AND P.A.S.S.	16
PPE REQUIREMENTS FOR VOLUNTEERS.....	16
CLEANING AND SANITIZING SURFACES AND HANDS.....	17
INFECTION CONTROL	18
PERSONAL SAFETY	18
LIFTING & CARRYING	19
TOBACCO POLICY	20
DISMISSAL POLICY.....	20
SUMMARY	21

WELCOME TO THE ST. CLOUD VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

The St. Cloud VA Health Care System relies on Volunteers and their gift of time and talents to execute daily operations at the highest level possible. We could not provide exceptional health care to our Veterans without these Volunteers; over 300 Volunteers regularly participate in over 60 assignments to enhance the Veteran experience. Voluntary Service is dedicated to supporting each Volunteer in their area of service. Please don't hesitate to contact the Voluntary Service team to address any questions, concerns, or general feedback you may have. Thank you for your interest in joining our incredible team.

OUR MISSION: St. Cloud VA Health Care System exists to honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

OUR VISION: St. Cloud VA Health Care System is a patient-centered, integrated health care system for Veterans, providing excellent health care, research and education; an organization where people choose to work; an active community partner; and a backup for national emergencies.

WHO WE ARE

The St. Cloud VA Health Care System has been serving Minnesota Veterans since 1924. We are part of the Veterans Integrated Service Network 23 (VISN 23), which includes all VA facilities in North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, and Minnesota.

The St. Cloud VA Health Care System consists of the St. Cloud campus and Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) in Alexandria, Brainerd, and Montevideo. The Health Care System provides primary and subspecialty medical, urgent, and surgical specialty care; mental health care; acute psychiatry services; and extended care and rehabilitation services. Services are delivered through outpatient clinics and the following residential beds: 15 acute psychiatry beds, 225 extended care and rehabilitation beds, and 148 Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (RRTP) beds.

The Center for Development and Civic Engagement/Voluntary Service (CDCE/VS) is an integral part of services provided through the St. Cloud VA Health Care System. Voluntary Service coordinates all Volunteer activities and donations which support the care of our Veterans. The St. Cloud VA utilizes donations of items, equipment, and money to provide the "extras" that have a daily impact on the quality of life for the Veterans that are served through the Health Care System.

OUR / CARE VALUES

Because / CARE, I will...



INTEGRITY - Act with high moral principle. Adhere to the highest professional standards. Maintain the trust and confidence of all with whom I engage.

COMMITMENT - Work diligently to serve Veterans and other beneficiaries. Be driven by an earnest belief in VA's mission. Fulfill my individual responsibilities and organizational responsibilities.

ADVOCACY Be truly Veteran-centric by identifying, fully considering, and appropriately advancing the interests of Veterans and other beneficiaries.

RESPECT - Treat all those I serve and with whom I work with dignity and respect. Show respect to earn it.

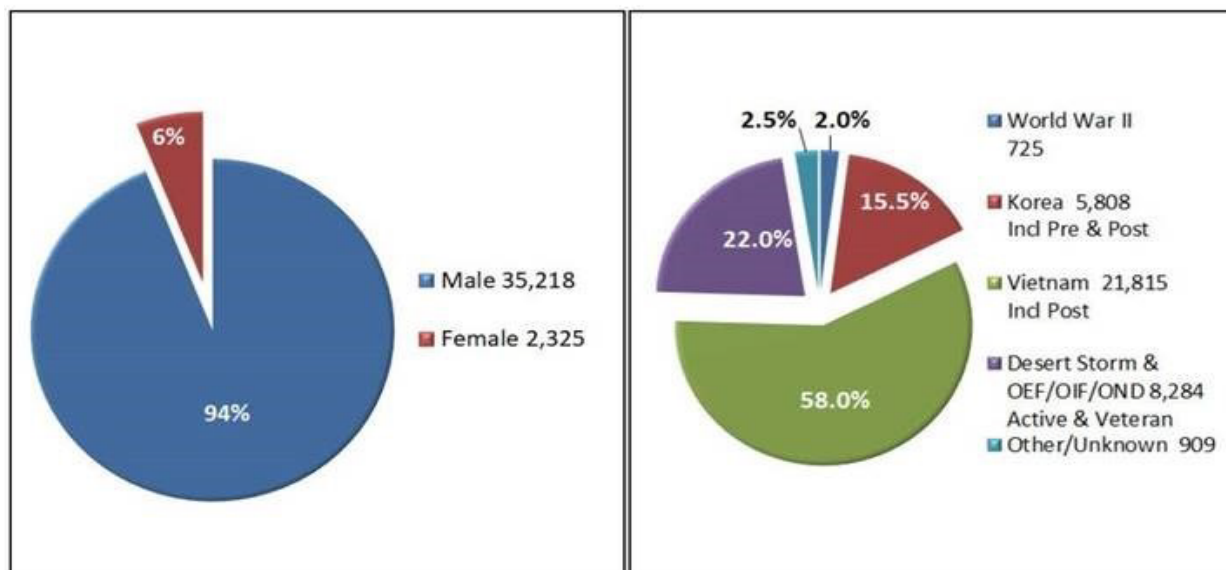
EXCELLENCE - Strive for the highest quality and continuous improvement. Be thoughtful and decisive in leadership, accountable for my actions, willing to admit mistakes, and rigorous in correcting them.

OUR PATIENTS

The Veteran population receiving care through the St. Cloud VA is a very diverse group. The VA serves male **and** female adults (18-74 years old) and geriatric patients (75 years and older) with primary care, long term care and mental health services. Patients in each of these categories have unique needs and capabilities.

- Adult patients may be facing changes in their health and physical abilities. Geriatric patients may also be coping with additional challenges, e.g., physical changes, diminished hearing or vision, mobility concerns, death of a loved one, loss of personal control over decision making and life choices etc. All patients should be encouraged to develop their potential while maintaining as much independence as possible.

Who We Serve



We are committed to a respectful and inclusive environment for all. **No form of discrimination will be tolerated at any level.** Please remember that the service and sacrifice of all Veterans is the driving force behind the care we provide. All staff and Volunteers are expected to approach their tasks with integrity and dignity, all Veterans deserve the best service we can possibly provide.

We routinely have more than 200 residents in our Community Living Centers (long-term care facilities). Here are some tips to help you interact with Veterans residing at our facility:

- Take a positive approach, showing kindness, concern, and respect.
- Try to be a good listener - no need to give advice, just be an empathetic listener.
- Make simple, clear, straightforward requests.
- Show tolerance and understanding for behavior that seems unusual or strange to you.
- Take threats seriously and report them to your Supervisor or the VA Police.
- Do not have social, business, or romantic relationships with Veterans.
- Don't lend money to Veterans or accept gifts from Veterans.
- Patient safety and well-being should always be your primary concern.

RED VEST / RED CARD PROGRAM

A Veteran who is wearing a **RED SASH OR RED MESH VEST** is at risk for wandering away. **DO NOT** leave a Veteran with a **RED SASH/MESH VEST** unattended at any time. If you are escorting a Veteran with a **RED SASH/MESH VEST**, make sure you do a "warm handoff" to a responsible staff member when you reach the intended destination – never leave the Veteran in a waiting room or on the unit without direct supervision. When escorting a Veteran wearing a **RED SASH/MESH VEST**, you will be given a red card when you meet them on the unit that has their name and unit number displayed (see attached pictures of a sample of the red card and the red vest below). This red card is to be transferred directly to the staff member that assumes direct supervision of the Veteran at the intended destination for the appointment. When escorting a Veteran back to the unit from an appointment you will be given the red card again and you will need to pass it off to a staff member on the unit to be assured that the Veteran will be under direct supervision.



VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION

If you have any suspicions that a Veteran or anyone at the VA is seriously considering harming him or herself, let the person know that you care, that he or she is not alone and that you are there to help. The prevention of Veteran Suicide is everyone's business. If you know a Veteran experiencing crisis, please connect with any VA staff or call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and press 1. **The Veterans Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.** You can contact the St. Cloud VA Veteran Suicide Prevention Team Members through the VA Operator for more information.

All Volunteers will be expected to complete a training session related to Veteran Suicide Prevention. A link to a video of the training session is copied below. You can view the video here as part of the training associated with the orientation process. Once you complete the orientation process, there will be a quiz about "Operation S.A.V.E." which is referenced within the video.

Link to Veteran Suicide Prevention Training video:

<https://www.facebook.com/StCloudVAHCS/videos/1212061885656676/>

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customer Service is any activity that enhances the Veterans' experience such that their expectations are exceeded. Every day, there are many ways we can effectively respond to the needs of those we serve and those with whom we work. Never forget that it is an honor to be able to serve our nation's Veterans. Most Veterans appreciate what you do for them and will respond with a smile. As a Volunteer, you must learn to empathize with a Veteran's feelings, appreciate their concerns, and let them know that you are there if they need you. A good Volunteer works on developing empathy, tact, courtesy, and a smile that lets the Veteran know that you care about them. Volunteers and employees are responsible for treating Veterans with dignity, respecting each Veteran's cultural, psychosocial, spiritual, and personal values, and protecting the Veteran's right to confidentiality. The following gestures and statements do not take much time, but the return on your investment is very gratifying:

- **Introduce yourself** – Establish a personal identity with the person by introducing yourself by name.
- **Identify** – Many times, people feel a loss of personal identity. Call the person by name to reinforce that you are relating to them in a personal way.
- **Respect** – Show respect by addressing the Veteran by their given name (Mr. Hernandez or Mrs. Smith, for example). Individuals who prefer to be addressed by their first name will let you know.
- **Knock** – A resident patient's privacy is interrupted at all hours of the day and night. Be considerate, tap lightly on the door before you enter a resident's room.
- **Smile** – Smiles help to promote a friendly environment. Administered at an appropriate time, a smile may be the most comforting treatment you can give to a patient.
- **Greet** – As you walk through the corridors and other public areas of the facility, greet everyone by saying "hello", "good morning" or whatever may be appropriate for the situation. This short interaction will help Veterans and guests feel welcome.
- **Compliment** – Simple observations can reveal many opportunities to pay sincere compliments.
- **Initiate** – Anticipate needs and respond before you are asked. Your perceptiveness and thoughtfulness will be appreciated and admired. If someone looks confused or needs assistance, stop and lend a hand. By taking the initiative, you can exceed expectations.

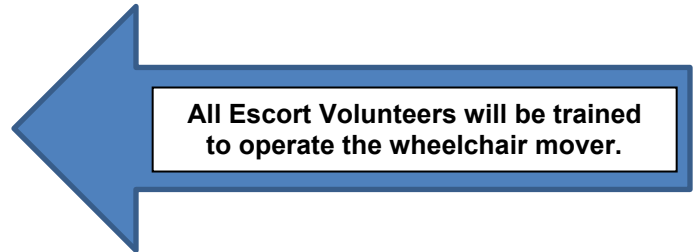
TRANSPORTING PATIENTS WITH A WHEELCHAIR



The responsibility for transporting patients by wheelchair is very important.

- Be very careful that the patient is secure in the chair, sitting straight, feet on the footrests, hands away from the wheels, etc.
- Do not hurry. The person in the wheelchair has given you complete control over his/her safety and being pushed too fast can be frightening.
- Push with caution. Take care not to get too close to walls and door frames – you don't want to bump any part of a patient's body.
- Patients being transported in wheelchairs should be backed into the elevators.
- Under no circumstances should you try to transfer a patient, either in or out of their wheelchair, this is a responsibility for trained VA staff members only.
- If a patient is able to get out of his/her wheelchair by themselves, always ensure that the brakes have been applied and the footrests raised. Stand by to steady the patient if needed.
- The VA has self-propelled wheelchair movers to transport bariatric patients. Do not put yourself at risk of injury by trying to move a bariatric patient without the use of the wheelchair mover.

Volunteers must complete wheelchair mover training before attempting to operate this piece of equipment.



- If a patient collapses, has trouble breathing, complains of pain, or shows other signs of distress, ask for help from the nearest VA staff person or alert the Rapid Response team by calling extension 6400 to report the medical emergency.
- Report any patient injury to VA medical staff.

WHEELCHAIR ETIQUETTE

Many of our patients require the assistance of a wheelchair. Patients should be treated as if the wheelchair is an extension of their body. Be courteous in your interactions. Approach the patient from the front and introduce yourself. Explain what you are going to do: "I am here to take you to your appointment". Here are some other tips for interacting with people in wheelchairs.

- Focus on the person, not on his or her disability. It is appropriate to shake hands with a person who has a disability, even if they have limited use of their hands or wear an artificial limb.
- Always ask the person who uses a wheelchair if he or she would like assistance before you jump in to help. Your help may not be needed or wanted.
- A wheelchair is part of the patient's own personal or body space. Do not hang on, lean on, or rest your foot on a patient's wheelchair.
- Speak directly to the person who uses the wheelchair, not to someone who is nearby as if the wheelchair user does not exist.
- If your conversation lasts more than a few minutes, consider sitting down to get yourself on the same eye-level as the person who uses the wheelchair.
- Don't demean or patronize the person who uses a wheelchair by patting him or her on the head.
- It is acceptable to use expressions like "running along" or "let's go for a walk" when speaking to a person who uses a wheelchair. It is likely they express the idea of moving along in the same way you do.
- People who use wheelchairs have varying capabilities. Some people who use wheelchairs can walk with aid or for short distances. They may use a wheelchair because it helps them to conserve energy and to move about with greater efficiency.
- Don't classify or think of people who use wheelchairs as "sick." Wheelchairs are used to help people adapt to or compensate for mobility impairments that result from non-contagious impairments.
- Check your assumptions! Don't assume that using a wheelchair is a tragedy. Wheelchairs are a means of freedom that allows the user to move about independently and fully engage in life.

PATIENT ADVOCACY PROGRAM

The St. Cloud VA Health Care System takes pride in providing the highest quality of care and outstanding customer service. The VA recognizes that there may be times when a patient or family member has a concern about their care experience that requires attention. No matter which service a Veteran may visit, they should always be able to find a staff member to assist in resolving any issues or concerns they may have.

If a Volunteer becomes aware that a Veteran is not satisfied with some aspect of their care experience, it is appropriate to ask if the Veteran voiced the concern with the care provider team. If presenting the concern to the care provider team did not resolve the concern, the Volunteer can inform the Veteran of the Patient Advocate Program. The Patient Advocate team is located on the second floor of Building 48 in Room 237. The Patient Advocate team can also be contacted by phone at (320) 255-6353 or by Secure Message on the My HealtheVet website.

The Patient Advocate team members serve as liaisons between patients and the care provider teams, acting on the patient's behalf to resolve their concerns, and ensuring that patients understand their rights and responsibilities.

Volunteers also have the Patient Advocate team as a resource for any concerns that they might have. If a Volunteer has a concern about how they were treated or other aspects of their daily interactions, they can contact the Patient Advocate team for support. The Patient Advocate representatives will address the concern presented by the Volunteer and communicate with appropriate department representatives to ensure that the situation is brought to resolution properly.

HIPAA PRIVACY RULE TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEERS

WHAT IS HIPAA?

- **HIPAA** is the **H**ealth **I**nsurance **P**ortability and **A**ccountability **A**ct passed by Congress in 1996.
- This federal law governs the use and release of a patient's personal health information, also known as "**protected health information**" or **PHI**. This information can relate to the past, present, or future physical, mental health, or condition of the patient. This includes name, address, dates of treatment, and other identifying information in addition to the actual medical record documentation.

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO VOLUNTEERS?

- Volunteers as well as paid employees must comply with the law that protects personal health information (**PHI**). This means that you will NOT share any information about a patient or their condition with anyone who does not need to know.
- All paid and unpaid staff of a health care agency must receive training related to **HIPAA**.

HOW DO I COMPLY WITH THE HIPAA REGULATIONS?

- Volunteers should not discuss anything about a patient or their condition with anyone except the staff responsible for their care.
- Paid and unpaid staff are allowed to access only the minimum amount of information necessary to complete their official VA duties.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I SHARE PROTECTED CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION?

- There are civil and criminal penalties for noncompliance including fines up to \$250,000 and/or imprisonment up to 10 years for intentionally misusing **PHI**. You would also no longer be allowed to volunteer for the St. Cloud VA Health Care System.

HIPAA and Privacy Reminders

The following are reminders for how we can all help to ensure the privacy rights of a patient:

- Avoid using a patient's name in public hallways and elevators.
- Isolate and/or lock file cabinets and records rooms.
- Provide additional security, such as passwords on computers maintaining personal information.
- Make sure there are no patient records or documents containing patient information lying around in areas. All patient records should be covered or hidden from view of anyone not reviewing the record.

For more information about **HIPAA** Privacy Rules, please contact the Compliance Officer Sharon Meschke, at (320) 255-6480, Extension 6769.

TAKING PICTURES ON CAMPUS

Volunteers must safeguard Veteran privacy. In residential settings, Volunteers, if asked, may assist Veterans and their family members/visitors in taking a photograph of the patient and their family/visitors using the patient's or family member/visitor's camera and with the verbal consent of all persons whose image will appear in the photograph.

Volunteers have no additional authorization to engage in photography, audio, or video recording of any kind while on campus.

WHO TO CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PRIVACY

The Facility Privacy Officer is Julie Kraus. Her telephone number is (320) 255-6480, extension 6408. Your Supervisor or Voluntary Service Staff can help you contact her office.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR VOLUNTEERS

The St. Cloud VA Health Care System will provide a safe and healthy environment that promotes dignity and respect for all. Conduct and behaviors at any level that are not in line with this objective are not acceptable. This includes, but is not limited to, verbal abuse, sexual harassment, physical abuse, intimidating behavior, reportable violations, and any criminal violation of law.

Volunteers and employees are responsible for ensuring a safe and healthy workplace environment. They are responsible for reporting violations at any level of the organization. Volunteers and employees have an obligation to inform the VA Police of any threat of violence (i.e. duty to warn). The employee has discharged the duty if subsequent to the threat, he/she informs his/her immediate Supervisor of the threat. If the Supervisor is not available, the employee should report the threat directly to the VA Police. The VA Police will investigate the complaint and will keep the threatened party informed of the ongoing investigation.

Expected Behavior (includes, but is not limited to):

- Be respectful and considerate of all Veterans, fellow Volunteers, and employees. Keep an open mind and listen constructively. Question and participate. Criticize only ideas, not people. Resolve disagreements and differing views constructively and at the lowest level possible.
- Communicate in a timely fashion; involve the appropriate person(s), in an appropriate setting. Be honest and direct. Be professional, constructive, respectful, and efficient.
- Speak up and report Code of Conduct violations or any quality and safety concerns. There will be no retaliation or retribution for reporting or participating in the investigation of quality and safety concerns.
- Adhere to conventional standards of acceptable work behavior. Be punctual in reporting for duty. Be free from intoxicants. Use resources wisely. Follow safety guidelines. Perform duties as assigned. Collaborate and communicate with fellow Volunteers and employees as necessary during the course of performing those duties.

Expected Action if Unacceptable Behavior Occurs (includes, but is not limited to):

- The recipient of unacceptable behaviors is responsible for bringing the behavior to the attention of the offending party. The offending party is expected to acknowledge their behavior and take appropriate action to prevent its recurrence.
- In situations where the recipient of unacceptable behavior is unable to approach the offending party or resolve the situation at the lowest level, the recipient is expected to report to his/her Supervisor or the Voluntary Service Officer. Any evidence or information that gives him/her reasonable cause to suspect violations of the Code of Conduct needs to be included when reporting.
- Criminal violations involving felonies shall be immediately reported to the VA Office of Inspector General (VAOIG).

Reporting of Criminal Activity, Protections and Sanctions:

- **Duty to Report (38 CFR Part 1 Section 201):** All VA employees/Volunteers with knowledge or information of possible or actual criminal violations occurring on VA premises related to VA programs, operations, facilities, contracts, or information technology systems, shall immediately report such knowledge or information to their Supervisor, any management official, the VA Police, or directly to the VAOIG. Serious crimes (felonies) must be reported immediately to the VAOIG. Reportable crimes include:
 - Waste, fraud, and abuse.
 - Violations of laws, rules, or regulations.
 - Physical harm to an employee, VA patient, Veteran, or any other individual.
 - Corruption and mismanagement.
 - Any evidence or information that gives a reasonable cause to suspect serious irregularity or criminal violation.

How to Contact VAOIG Resident Agent in Charge: Call 1(800) 488-8244 or submit the report on the VAOIG website - <https://www.va.gov/oig/hotline/> .

REFERENCES: HCSM CD00-51, CODE OF CONDUCT (Entire policy document is available upon request.)

DRESS CODE FOR VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer appearance and apparel should follow these guidelines:

- Hair should be clean and neatly groomed.
- Clothing should be neat, clean, and well cared for.
- Volunteers are to be clean and without any offensive odor.
- Volunteers are to practice good personal hygiene.
- All Volunteers will be required to have a government-issued picture ID. Identification badges shall be worn at all times while on the campus performing assigned Volunteer duties. The badge should be worn above the waist so that your name and picture are visible. All identification badges will be unaltered and free of pins, tape, stickers, or ribbons attached to the badge.
- Only minimal jewelry should be worn while performing Volunteer duties. Only one set of earrings is acceptable. No tongue or other visible piercings are allowed. Jewelry must not interfere with Volunteer safety, patient safety, or operating of equipment.
- Tattoos should be covered to the extent possible. Tattoos which contain profanity, nudity or are in other ways considered offensive must be covered.
- Clothing shall be appropriately buttoned or zipped.
- Shirts must have sleeves.
- Nice sweatshirts or caps that are adorned with feminine detailing, college or professional sports team, Service Organization logos, and VA or clothing brand logos are allowed.
- Leggings must be accompanied by a top garment which is fingertip-length or longer around the entire circumference of the body. Top garment length is measured when the arms are resting at the sides with fingertips fully extended.
- Open-toed shoes may be worn by Volunteers who do not come into close contact with patients and where these are not prohibited by their department policy or job-specific hazards. Open-toed shoes must have a closed heel or a strap around the heel. Heels should not be higher than 3" for safety reasons.
- Youth Volunteers are required to wear the shirt provided by Voluntary Service when on duty.

The following are examples of clothing that should **NOT** be worn while volunteering at the St. Cloud VA Health Care System:

- Clothing or caps that contain logos that advertise tobacco, alcoholic beverages, gambling, violence or graphic depiction, anything sexual or lewd in nature, political parties, or religion.
- Fragrance, including perfumes, colognes, essential oils, and scented hand/body lotions, as they can cause severe allergic reactions or sensitivities in patients, other Volunteers, or staff members.
- Sheer or see-through garments.
- T-shirts that are worn as an outer garment – specifically athletic/gym wear, or undershirts.
- Wearing sunglasses indoors (unless medically necessary).
- Tank tops or sleeveless shirts of any sort. Strapless, tube, or crop tops. Shorts, running/athletic shorts, skirts, sundresses, or skorts above the knee. Casual or capri style pants.
- Sweatpants, wind pants, or spandex pants.
- Pants that are pinned, rolled, tucked into socks, or tied at the ankles.
- Crocs® or similar style shoes, house slippers, flip-flops, thong sandals (beach wear or shower wear type).
- Discolored, torn, worn, frayed, tattered, or faded clothing.
- Blouses, shirts, or tops that are low cut or are tight fitting.

Volunteers must follow the Dress Code guidelines that are applicable for the Service Line responsible for their work areas, especially where health, sanitation, and safety are a consideration.

REFERENCES: MCP HR-20, Employee Dress Code (Entire policy document is available upon request.)

FEDERAL TORT CLAIMS ACT

Volunteers are considered “WOC (without compensation) employees” within the purview of the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA). Therefore, while you are acting in the scope of your Volunteer assignment, you are afforded the protection of FTCA. This coverage extends only to the period in which you are performing the assignment. If a claim is made or suit is filed against a Volunteer, VA does an investigation to determine if the person’s actions were part of his or her official Federal duties or not. VA then recommends to the Department of Justice that any suit, if filed in a State court, be moved to a Federal court and the Federal Government takes the place of the person in the suit. If the Department of Justice agrees, that is exactly what happens, and the employee is no longer a party to the claim or suit. Therefore, it is very important to do your assignment as directed by VA staff.

Volunteers are also considered WOC employees within the purview of the Federal Employees’ Compensation Act (FECA), 5 USC 8101, et seq. FECA provides for compensation and medical services for the disability or death of an employee resulting from personal injury sustained incident to the employee’s service. The determination that the injury or death was “incident to service” must be made by the Department of Labor or, ultimately, by the courts.

Requirements

To ensure that Volunteers maintain their status as WOC Federal employees, as well as their standing with Voluntary Service, there are a number of requirements that must be followed, including:

- Individuals must be fully registered as Regularly Scheduled (RS) Volunteers with Voluntary Service and ensure that their hours of Volunteer time are recorded regularly
- Receive job orientation from their VA Supervisor and participate in Volunteer orientation presented by Voluntary Service Staff
- Volunteers must always be supervised by a paid VA employee, and
- Maintain all required documentation with Voluntary Service, as required by VA Guidelines
- Making sure that the Volunteer assignment is performed as instructed during job orientation
- Completing annual refresher training and providing all documentation required
- Do not report for duty under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or other intoxicants
- Volunteer Drivers must make sure they have been expressly authorized to use a Government vehicle or to conduct Government business using your private vehicle
- Volunteer Drivers must take the most direct routes when transporting a Veteran to and from a medical appointment; for example, side trips to do personal errands for yourself or another are not part of your Federal duties.
- Volunteer Drivers should not pick up unauthorized passengers.

What if you are in an accident?

If you are involved in a motor vehicle accident while driving as a Volunteer, you should first, of course, summon any medical assistance necessary. Then, call the police and follow their instructions. Do not make any statements at the scene of the accident about whose fault the accident was or any other statement except to identify yourself as a VA Volunteer. Furnish any information required by law. As soon as possible, you should fill out a Standard Form 91, "Operator's Report of Motor Vehicle Accident," and give it to the Voluntary Service Officer. If you are contacted later by an insurance investigator, a non-VA attorney, or other interested party, you should refer them to the Voluntary Service Officer or the VA District Counsel.

What if you are sued?

If you are served with suit papers from an accident you were in while driving as a VA Volunteer, you should, as soon as possible, furnish the papers to the Voluntary Service Officer and tell them how you received the suit papers. The Voluntary Service Officer will alert the VA District Counsel (VA's legal counsel), who will ensure that any additional investigation is completed before contacting the United States Attorney so that you may be dismissed from the suit. You may also be contacted by the VA District Counsel during an administrative claims investigation of an accident before any suit is filed. You should give the District Counsel your full cooperation so that your interests and those of the Government will be protected.

What if your property is damaged or lost on the job?

Under the Military Personnel and Civilian Employees Claims Act, VA employees (including Volunteers) may file claims for damaged or lost personal property with the local personnel office within two years of the damage or loss. VA may pay if your property was lost or damaged "incident to" your service and your possession of the property was reasonable, useful, or proper under the circumstances. VA cannot pay if the loss or damage was intentional or due to your negligence. Also, if you have a right to recover for the loss or damage of your personal property from an insurance company, you must file a claim with your insurance first. To file a claim, please complete VA Form 4760 for incidents due to VA negligence or VA Form 4629 for incidents due to the actions of a patient.

What if you are injured on the job?

If you are injured while performing the duties of your Volunteer assignment, you should promptly notify your VA Supervisor and, if necessary, be seen in the Occupational Health Department. You will also be informed of your right to file a claim with the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs at the Department of Labor. That office will determine your benefits, which may include medical care and hospitalization, compensation for any loss of wages or disability, and survivor's benefits and burial expenses in the case of death.



Report any injury to your VA Supervisor. If medical attention is necessary, the Occupational Health Department will provide direction for treatment. Your VA Supervisor and the Safety & Occupational Health Specialist will need to investigate the accident. Voluntary Service or Occupational Health will explain how to file a claim with Worker's Compensation if warranted.

HOSPITAL SAFETY**EMERGENCIES AND NUMBERS**

Generally, in the event of an emergency, Volunteers are expected to take direction from VA staff. However, on every phone on campus, you will find a green sticker displaying extension numbers that can be called to solicit an appropriate response to the most common emergencies:

VA Police: extension 6224

Fire (active fire): extension 6333

Code Blue/Rapid Response (medical emergency): extension 6400

Crisis/Behavior Response (behavioral incident to include violence or suicidal intent): extension 6213

In the event of a medical emergency, employees or Volunteers are to dial extension 6400 to initiate the Rapid Response team. When the Rapid Response team members arrive on scene, they will assume responsibility for the Veteran's care.

In addition, you may hear one of the following pages announced over the PA system; you should report to the nearest staff person to determine your course of action.

Facility Lock Down/Restriction: securing entrances

Missing Patient: immediate assistance with missing patient

Active Threat: immediate danger

Missing Minor: immediate assistance with missing minor

Fire Alarm System Outage: fire alarm system is not operational

Decontamination: contaminated individuals/chemical spill

SEVERE WEATHER ALERTS

During a **Tornado or Severe Thunderstorm Watch** report to your VA Supervisor to make sure you are prepared to help if it turns into a Warning. There will be an announcement over the intercom to inform everyone that there is a Tornado or Severe Thunderstorm Watch, the counties involved, and the timeframe for the Watch.

During a **Tornado or Severe Thunderstorm Warning**, ask staff what you should do to help. Follow staff directions. You may be asked to move patients into the areas of shelter. You should take cover in a designated shelter area away from windows. Listen and wait for the "All Clear" signal from the staff in the area.

FIRE PLAN: R.A.C.E. AND P.A.S.S.

- **R**escue: Help move patients to a safe area as directed by VA staff.
- **A**larm: Initiate alarm by activating Pull Station (located near every building exit and stairwell).
- **C**onfine: Close the door to the room when exiting to contain the fire.
- **E**xtinguish/**E**vacuate: By closing the door you have done your part to extinguish the fire. We do not expect anyone to be responsible for extinguishing the fire. We want you to evacuate the area to be safe.

Fire Emergency Response**WHEN FIRE ALARMS ARE ACTIVATED**

- EVERYONE is expected to respond when the fire alarms are activated.
- How do you know if there is a fire alarm activated in a particular building when traveling through the connecting corridors?
 - The fire alarm horn will be sounding.
 - The strobe lights will be flashing. The strobe lights flash in all affected areas of the building until the alarm is reset.
 - The connecting corridor doors in some buildings close, as well as some doors within the building. When you come across a closed door, look through the window to see if the strobe light is flashing.
- Do not enter buildings when the alarm is sounding, or strobe lights are flashing.
 - Wait until the strobe lights stop and/or VA Police, St. Cloud Fire Department or VA staff have made an “All Clear” announcement before passing through the building or corridor. Your other option is to take another path to your destination.



You should not attempt to extinguish a fire by yourself unless you are in immediate danger (use of the portable fire extinguisher requires special training per OSHA standards). If you must use a fire extinguisher, remember the term **P.A.S.S.**

- **P**ull the pin or ring on the handle of the fire extinguisher.
- **A**im the fire extinguisher at the base of the fire.
- **S**queeze lever or handle.
- **S**weep fire extinguisher from side to side slowly.

PPE REQUIREMENTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

All employees and Volunteers are required to wear a non-medical face mask at all times while in public areas of the Health Care System. Attempts should be made to maintain proper social distancing whenever possible.

When transporting a Veteran in a wheelchair, a Volunteer should always wear a face mask and a face shield. Face shields will be distributed by Voluntary Service and/or may be obtained within the Service Line where the volunteer assignment is located.

Additional forms of PPE may be required by individual Service Lines. Please check with your VA Supervisor for information concerning special PPE requirements for your assignment area.

Certain assignments may require that you perform specific cleaning tasks. Volunteer Drivers are responsible for cleaning the vehicles they are driving according to the prescribed policy. Volunteers that push Veterans in VA-owned wheelchairs are responsible for cleaning the wheelchair after each use.

The information shown below describes the type of wipes that are acceptable for use when cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and when sanitizing hands.

CLEANING AND SANITIZING SURFACES AND HANDS

The standard wipe to use when cleaning and sanitizing surfaces or items is the bottle of wipes with the purple top, labeled **Super Sani-Cloth**. The only exception to this is when cleaning a kiosk screen, which requires the AF3 gray top bottled wipes.

Be advised that there are also antibacterial wipes for hands called **SANI-HANDS**. These wipes may also have a purple top - **it is imperative that you look at the container before using any wipe from a container with a purple top to ensure you are using the correct one**. The Sani-Hands containers that have a purple top, will also have a green sticker on the lid reminding users that these wipes are not to be used for cleaning and sanitizing surfaces or hands in a clinical setting. Also, some of the **SANI-HANDS** containers may have a blue top. The **SANI-HANDS** wipes can be used for sanitizing hands in areas other than clinical settings.

Look Before You Wipe



INFECTION CONTROL

Infection Control means doing everything possible to **prevent** the spread of disease. Please observe the following guidelines when on duty: hand washing is essential for prevention and control of infection and must be practiced diligently, using soap, running water, and friction. You should wash your hands:

- When hands are visibly soiled.
- After personal use of the toilet.
- Before preparing or handling snacks for patients.
- After sneezing, coughing, and blowing or wiping nose.
- Before and after tour of duty.
- Before and after eating.

Please be in good health when reporting for duty -- that is, free from infection. Anyone with a sore throat, cold or flu symptoms, or open skin area that is draining should stay at home until symptoms subside.



PERSONAL SAFETY

BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS

The bloodborne pathogens standard was passed by OSHA to protect workers from diseases passed through blood and other potentially infectious materials. Some of these diseases include AIDS, Hepatitis B, and others. Protect yourself through the following means:

- Treat all blood and other fluids as though they are infectious. Wear appropriate personal protective equipment. If you have been transporting specimens, wash your hands again before eating, drinking, or applying cosmetics.
- Volunteers should report spills of any kind and its location to the nearest staff member.
- A good rule of thumb: **“If it is wet and it is not yours, do not touch it”**
- Specimen containers should be sealed and double-bagged before they are given to you. Ask the staff to re-bag them if they are leaking.
- **Do Not** handle used needles, sharps, or bandages. If you find one, ask a staff person to dispose of it.

The red Universal Biohazard Symbol shown below is another way to warn you of the presence of potentially infectious materials. You should not handle products that have this red symbol displayed on them. When you come across a spill and you don't know what it is, assume that it might be infectious body fluid or a hazardous chemical. Notify the nearest VA staff person and request that Housekeeping Staff be informed of the spill.



LIFTING & CARRYING

- Volunteers should never lift or attempt to transfer a patient.
- Only trained VA staff members should transfer or lift a patient. If a patient needs assistance where lifting is required, a staff member needs to be contacted.
- Volunteers should not be required to lift heavy items as part of their assigned duties; if you choose to lift objects, please use good body mechanics to prevent injury.
- Proper techniques to use when lifting and carrying a load are:
 - Get close to the load.
 - Grab the load safely by placing your hands under the object.
 - Let your abdomen, legs, and buttocks do the work – lift with your legs, not your back.
 - Bend your knees, with feet slightly spread for balance and stability.
 - Keep your head, shoulders, and hips in a straight line as you lift.
 - Do not twist.
 - Carry the load close to your body.

TOBACCO POLICY

All grounds, buildings and vehicles associated with the St. Cloud VA Health Care System are to be tobacco-free.

Health Care System Memorandum CD00-26: “**Smoke and Tobacco-Free Campus**” prohibits the use of any type of tobacco or tobacco products on St. Cloud VA Health Care System’s properties. This policy (effective October 2019) is intended to reduce the risks associated with smoking and tobacco use for the health and well-being of Veterans (inpatients and outpatients), visitors, Volunteers, contractors, vendors, and employees. The Memorandum describes the requirements of a comprehensive smoke-free and tobacco-free policy, and takes measures to protect Veterans, visitors, Volunteers, contractors, vendors, and employees from the harmful adverse health effects of tobacco and secondhand smoke environments. The smoking of cigarettes, cigars, or use of any tobacco product is prohibited on St. Cloud VA Health Care System grounds, at CBOC locations and in all government-operated vehicles. Tobacco products include the use of “spit” or “chewing” tobacco, electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), including but not limited to electronic or e-cigarettes, vape pens or e-cigars.

DISMISSAL POLICY

Volunteers may be dismissed for several reasons.

- Arriving at your assignment under the influence of alcohol or drugs or using while performing your assignment.
- Sharing confidential information.
- Accepting money or anything of value from a Veteran.
- Gross misconduct.
- Violations of the Code of Conduct.
- Disregard for the directions in this handbook.

SUMMARY

Factors to keep in mind:

- Volunteers are prohibited from distributing materials and/or promoting political or religious beliefs to other Volunteers, employees, patients, or guests.
- Your VA issued name badge should only be worn when volunteering in your VA assignment; you are not considered a representative of the St. Cloud VA outside of your designated assignment.
- No weapons (knives, guns, pepper spray, etc.) are permitted on VA grounds.
- Please adhere to posted speed limits and only park in designated parking spots (Volunteers are issued a Volunteer parking placard which enables you to park in Patient, Visitor, Employee Only, and Volunteer parking areas).
- Inform CDCE/VS of all changes to your contact information (phone number, e-mail address, and/or mailing address).
- Volunteers are not permitted to accept gifts (money, canteen books, or items of value) from a Veteran. Volunteers are discouraged from lending money or purchasing items per the request of a Veteran. When handling patient money or items of value, it is recommended that a witness (staff member or Volunteer) observe the entire transaction.
- All schedule changes or inability to report for your Volunteer assignment should be communicated to your assignment Supervisor, not through the CDCE/VS office.
- If you decide to discontinue your Volunteer role, even for an extended period, please contact the CDCE/VS office. Volunteers are required to surrender their parking placard and ID badge at the time of the full termination of their service.
- Volunteers are required to complete and submit an annual training packet in a timely fashion. Failure to do so, will result in deactivation of their Volunteer status until the materials are received by CDCE/VS.
- Volunteers are required to pass an initial Tuberculosis screen prior to starting their assignment. A blood draw will be offered through Occupational Health at no expense to the Volunteer.
- Volunteers are required to obtain an annual influenza shot or wear a mask when at the facility during the influenza season. The influenza season spans the four-month period from December 1 through March 31 but may be extended by the discretion of VA officials. An influenza vaccine is available to all Volunteers through Occupational Health at no expense to the Volunteer.
- Youth Volunteers (anyone under 18 years of age) are prohibited from being alone while Volunteering. A buddy system has been put in place as a safety precaution.
- It is the responsibility of the Volunteer to sign in each day to document the number of hours worked. Meal tickets can be obtained when you sign in. You must volunteer for four or more hours (not including your lunch break) to get a meal ticket. The meal ticket must be used the same day that it was obtained and is only valid during the normal operating hours of the Canteen. Please make sure to sign in at one of the designated locations listed below every time you volunteer.
 - Building 1 (Information Desk) - Physically sign in on the paper log and request a meal ticket from the Operator sitting at the main desk.
 - Building 49, Room 9 (Escort Office) - Physically sign in on the paper log and request a meal ticket from staff or you may sign in on the computer. Meal ticket will be generated by the computer.
 - Building 8, Room 108 (CDCE/VS Office) - Physically sign in on the paper log and request a meal ticket from staff or you may sign in on the computer. Meal ticket will be generated by the computer.

In Conclusion....

We are so very glad that you have decided to consider volunteering with the St. Cloud VA Health Care System. There is no better mission than to help Veterans receive the care they have earned.

As a Volunteer, you will be a very important and necessary member of the St. Cloud VA Health Care System team. You will play a vital role as a member of our health care team because you will be providing our Veterans with that extra measure of love, care, and concern - the human connection - which is so very important in the healing process. You will be serving those who served.

Daniel Ball
Voluntary Service Officer

Becky Henkemeyer
Voluntary Service Specialist

Debbie Breth
Voluntary Service Specialist

Kris Larson
Voluntary Service Assistant

Julie Schrom
Voluntary Service Assistant



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
St. Cloud VA Health Care System